

## Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 416

UNCLAS BANGKOK 5676

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ESCAP, OCON

SUBJ: ESCAP-34TH COMMISSION MEETING

REF: STATE 44246

1. THE EMBASSY ONLY RECEIVED THE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 1977 FOR THE MEKONG COORDINATING COMMITTEE (MCC) ON 24 FEBRUARY. HOWEVER, WE SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING DRAFT POSITION PAPER FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION.

2. PROBLE: THE US SUSPENDED ASSISTANCE TO THE MEKONG PROGRAM FOLLOWING THE FALL OF INDOCHINA IN THE SPRING OF 1975. DURING THE ESCAP 33RD SESSION IN APRIL 1977, THE RTG, SRV AND LPDR DELEGATES ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE NOTING AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO RE-ACTIVATE THE MEKONG PROGRAM THROUGH AN INTERIM COMMITTEE PENDING THE RESUMPTION OF PARTICIPATION BY DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA. EIGHT MONTHS LATER, ON JANUARY 5, 1978, THE THREE COUNTRIES SIGNED A DECLARATION TO THIS EFFECT. ACCORDING TO THE DECLARATION, THE COMMITTEE SHALL PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATER RESOURCES OF THE LOWER MEKONG BASIN TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL AND POWER PRODUCTION, IN ORDER TO MEET EFFECTIVELY THE NEEDS FOR RE-CONSTRUCTION AND GROWING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THE COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA, AND THE GROWING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THAILAND. THE FIRST OFFICIAL MEETING OF THE NEWLY FORMED

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INTERIM MEKONG COMMITTEE IS TAKING PLACE IN HANOI, 22-24 FEBRUARY 1978, WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA. MODEST RESOURCES HAVE BEEN MADE AVAILABLE, PRIMARILY FROM AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, JAPAN, THE NETHERLANDS, FRANCE AND THE UK. THESE ARE SUFFICIENT TO KEEP THE MEKONG SECRETARIAT SOLVENT FOR ANOTHER YEAR AND TO UNDERTAKE A FEW WORK PROJECTS SUCH AS AGRICULTURAL, POWER AND HYDROGRAPHIC

SURVEYS AND TO ESTABLISH CHANNEL BEACONS IN THE RIVER. THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST INTERIM COMMITTEE MEETING MAY BE CIRCULATED AT THE 34TH SESSION. THEIR WORK IS NECESSARILY LIMITED TO EXPLORING WAYS AND MEANS OF FINANCING PROJECTIONS AND DISCUSSING THE REACTIVATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S HYDROLOGIC NETWORK AND RADIO COMMUNICATIONS IN VIETNAM.

3. RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO THE US: US SUPPORT FOR THE MEKONG COMMITTEE'S PROGRAM INVOLVES SENSITIVE ISSUES RELATING TO OUR POLICY TOWARDS INDOCHINA.

4. US POSITION: THE US WAS NOT CRITICIZED DURING THE ESCAP 33RD SESSION FOR NOT PROVIDING NEW SUPPORT TO THE MEKONG COMMITTEE'S PROGRAM. FRIENDLY COUNTRIES WHO ARE SUPPORTING THE COMMITTEE'S WORK OFTEN INQUIRE IF OUR POSITION HAS CHANGED. OUR RESPONSE HAS BEEN THAT, UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE US DOES NOT FEEL IT APPROPRIATE TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE INDOCHINA STATES AND THAT CURRENT LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS PREVENT THE USE OF PUBLIC US FUNDS FOR SUCH PURPOSE. THIS RESPONSE REMAINS VALID. MOST ESCAP COUNTRIES UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES. WE BELIEVE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE INTERIM COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A MEETING DURING THE ESCAP 34TH SESSION BUT WE EXPECT THE EXECUTIVE AGENT FOR THE MCC TO BE INVITED TO GIVE A BRIEF REPORT TO THE PLENARY.

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5. DISCUSSION: THE US CONGRESS HAS PROHIBITED THE USE OF APPROPRIATED PUBLIC FUNDS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA AND PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT IS ALSO RESTRICTED. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR TO THE VIETNAMESE THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER RENEWED TRADE AND RELATED ECONOMIC PROGRAMS FOLLOWING THE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EMBASSIES. PRESENT CONDITIONS AND THE STATE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THREE OF THE FOUR RIPARIAN COUNTRIES ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO RESUME ITS SUPPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OR FOR ITS PROGRAMS.  
WHITEHOUSE

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